A CLASS AT PROFESSOR ĊIŻEK'S

Subject—
"AUTUMN"

By
FRANCESCA M. WILSON.

CHILDREN'S ART EXHIBITION FUND.
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H. Zuckermann. Aged 14.

"Something incomplete, it is true, but full of poetry."

(See p. 13 of Text.)

Helena Klaunzner. Aged 16 years.

"MONUMENTAL LIKE HER NATIVE MOUNTAINS."

(See p. 13 of Text.)

A CLASS
AT PROFESSOR ČIŽEK'S

THERE were from 50 to 60 children, boys and girls, of all ages from 6 to 15. Each one of them had a piece of paper of the same size in front of him, a charcoal pencil, and a box of paints. It was the day for the " Klassenarbeit "—no choosing of their own medium of expression to-day. Autumn was the subject Cizek proposed to them. It was a fine November day with the sun coming through after a week of mists, and it was a good day, he thought, to do Autumn on. They must represent Autumn by a figure. First they must draw a narrow margin round their paper, and the figure must be big enough for its head to reach the top of the margin, and its feet the bottom, for, as he explained to them afterwards, when discussing their work with them, a picture looks poverty-stricken and miserable when it has only a tiny figure in it, and is mostly empty. The size of the figure was law of the Medes and Persians, but otherwise they might make their Autumn just how they liked.

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He wondered how Hans would represent it. Hans said at once he would have an old man with baskets full of apples. Franz, after this suggestion, got on his feet, and said he would have someone blowing very hard at the trees so that the leaves blew off. Elizabeth, a small, determined, little party, with a pale face, and two straight pigtails, declared with great decision that she would have an old man with pots of paint, painting the leaves bright colours.

Cizek approved all these suggestions, declared them each as they came up very fine, and full of possibilities but as the children were already straining at the leash, so to speak, with eagerness to start, he closed the discussion, and told them to begin.

This they did with a speed and a lack of hesitation that surprised me. I could imagine myself toying with my charcoal and paper for half an hour wondering what I was going to do, but they made up their minds at once, and attacked the subject straight away. No doubt the constant encouragement of their Professor has developed this self-confidence and courage in them.

After a few minutes every child had a head on the paper, and some the whole figure. Cizek then reminded them that the figure must exactly fill the whole sheet. Several of them, he said, were starting without remembering this, and were making their heads too big or too small. They ought to sketch out very lightly the whole figure at once, before spending time on any detail. He then wandered up and down, an extraordinarily encouraging presence amongst them with his gentle, whimsical expression—mostly amused by what they were producing, but not in the detached, superior grown-up way, much

Martha Zehenter. Aged 14 years.

"One of our own Niederösterreich maidens."

(*See p. 12 of Text.*)

more in the serious child's way. He takes his children very seriously, as seriously as they take themselves, indeed. He never touched any of their drawings, nor did he go up to the black-board as most teachers do, to draw something for them himself in order to illustrate some question of proportion or anatomy. Where he could, he induced the children to stand up to their work as it would give them more freedom and boldness.

There was an extraordinary atmosphere of zest and joy in the whole room.

The smaller children worked away with great absorption, adding all sorts of interesting details to their original sketches just as ideas came into their heads. One boy made his Autumn a girl running against a strong wind, and he threw her pigtail out behind her and blew her bright ribbon off the end of it with chuckles of delight. Little Elizabeth had her old man wearing a deep red cloak, and painting the leaves gold and orange in a very brief space of time—and he really was there. Childish as the whole thing was, you could see what she meant if you stood at the end of the room, 20 feet away. Some of the older, more experienced artists daubed away with a dreamy expression, and when their figures were complete, began adding flowers and coloured leaves to their pictures, without having drawn them first. They wore an air of negligent ease that was most impressive.

After an hour and a quarter, the pictures were all collected and pinned against the wall, and the children squatted round in a circle full of the most eager expectation, for the discussion of their works is always the most thrilling part of the whole lesson. It was certainly a most motley collection. Lots of the sketches would have been passed

over hastily by most teachers as childish daubs. A few condescending words might have been found to say, but the serious attention that Cizek proceeded to turn on to them would hardly have been accorded.

Of the sixty sketches, there were about a dozen that attracted one's attention either for skill of execution, the liveliness of the fancy they expressed, or for some charm of line or colour. These dozen had a full share of Cizek's appreciative comment, but he saw something in all the others as well. He discussed them one by one, dwelling on them affectionately, sometimes with the amused pleasure of a humorist, sometimes with an artist's sheer delight in beauty, but always as seriously as though they were his own creations. Not that he was uncritical.

"Here is a woman in pale green and misty blue, a pleasing figure, but is she Autumn ?" he asks—"but that is DORIS GÜNTHER'S, of course, and Doris is so much the Spring herself, how can one expect her to make an Autumn ? It is true the leaves are falling about her little woman in the musical Autumn way though the flowers are still blooming in the grass. She is the Indian Summer—the second Spring that blossoms in the heart of Autumn. (*See illustration p.* 14.)

"Here is an indeterminate figure—one is not quite sure if it is man or woman, nor on which side of its body the head is placed. But Karl is a new boy, he will soon learn that the sexes are quite distinct, and that heads are on definite sides of bodies. Here is a very sprightly man leaning against a tree with the smartest curling moustaches, and baskets of apples beside him, but 'was schaust Du mich an ?' ('What are you looking at me like that for ?')" cried Cizek, while the children

Marie Kind. Aged 14 years.

"The Little Tanzmeister."

(See p. 12 of Text.)

Mäda Primavesi. Aged 15 years.

" WHOLESOME AS THE SOIL SHE SPRINGS FROM."

(See p. 13 of Text.)

Melitta Primavesi. Aged 12 years.

"A Jolly Toper."

(See p. 12 of Text)

Trautel Konrad. Aged 16 years.

" A Nymph amid gay colours."

(See p. 13 of Text.)

shouted with laughter, for, indeed, we suddenly all saw the little man looking at us with a most impudent and provocative expression. "Certainly, the impudent little man wants to sell his apples, and get good prices for them too. There is much humour in the picture, but is it quite Autumn—Autumn who gives everything to us so lavishly without asking for anything in return?

"MARGARETE'S old woman is surely a truer Autumn—she is old and bent because she has all the months of the year on her back; see how she sniffs the winter from afar—and how the cold wind blows her! Her dress is orange and red—it has all the true colours of Autumn in it. (*See illustration p.* 17.)

"And what about this little 'Tanzmeister' of MARIE KIND'S—how rhythmically he moves, how beautiful he is with his arms full of Autumn flowers and fruit." (The little Tanzmeister is in truth an exquisite creation, perfect in proportion, colour and fancy, and as rhythmical as the words Tanzmeister can suggest.) (*See illustration p.* 8.)

"And here is a jolly toper with his barrels full of the grapes that have been trodden in the winepress, and already he is drinking a glass of the year's new wine, and 'er hat recht' (the master's voice is full of zestful approbation). (*See illustration p.* 10.)

"And here FRL. UHLMANN has given us again one of her elegant and fashionable creations. Behold Madame Autumn walking towards us as it might be down the Kärntnerstrasse.

"And MARTHA ZEHENTER, though she has been in Holland, has not been lost to us—she has painted, not one of the Dutch children she found there, but one of our own Niederösterreich maidens. And that is very important.

for 'man versteht das Heimatliche am besten'; it is right that we should have roots in our own soil, and that we should paint the things we know and understand, rather than strive after something exotic that we do not really know or understand. (*See illustration p.* 5.)

"MÄDA PRIMAVESI has given us another splendid peasant type. Look at her expression—wholesome as the soil she springs from, sound as the apples in her baskets! And what splendid colour—like an orchestra of wind instruments! I am glad that Mäda remembers the country; that she hasn't forgotten the earth she belongs to—this dear earth of ours, which gives us rich fruits and wines, strong colour and joy in all our hearts. (*See illustration p.* 9.)

"HELENA KLAUNZNER has remembered. Here is one of her strong Tyrolean women, monumental like her native mountains. (*See illustration p.* 2.)

"And here is HERTA ZUCKERMANN who lamented all the lesson that nothing would succeed for her to-day. She has given us something incomplete, it is true, but full of poetry—a child standing, raising her hand, with a gesture most musical; a child who will, no doubt, be painted and finished to-morrow, and yet it is almost regrettable, she is so fresh and poetic and expressive just as she is. (*See frontispiece.*)

"TRAUTEL KONRAD has given us one of her own graceful and delicate creations, a nymph amid gay colours, but with a wind that is cold blowing at her. We are always glad to see these creations of Trautel's and we are glad to have her back sharing this joyful and merry hour with us ('freudevolle, lustige Stunde'). (*See illustration p.* 11.)

"Here is a man rushing 'geschwind, geschwind' with

Doris Günther. Aged 13 years.

"The Indian Summer—the second Spring that blossoms in the heart of Autumn."

(See p. 7 of Text.)

all the fruit he must bring to market, and the wild ducks are flying above him just as I saw them last week at Grinzing with the sun making them shine white, and a great noise of wings. And no doubt the artist has seen them flying like that, too. . . RICHARD has not yet learnt to give us things he has felt and experienced. One must paint things cherished in the heart, otherwise they are not interesting. And his poor young Autumn in a bathing costume, he must be so cold.

"MAGDA'S old woman is picturesque and full of character. It is true she is wrongly proportioned, but Magda is quite right to make her just how she feels her."

So he passed from one to the other, and the delighted children listened, hearing their own imaginations made articulate, as it were, and their thoughts interpreted and explained as they scarcely would have known how to explain them themselves. It was the children who had trifled, because they had had nothing to express, or because they had striven after some artificial effect from a memory of some picture they had seen, who found their work passed over without appreciation or encouraging comment.

No description of this lesson can give a full impression of what it was. Cizek is evasive and cannot be quite written down. But I felt, after I had attended it, that I understood a great deal of his secret. He is not only intensely an artist, he is also a keen and incisive critic. But his criticisms have their root (as all true criticisms should have) in understanding and sympathy. He is gifted with a rare understanding and sympathy with the child mind. The only thing that finds lack of response from him is insincerity and artificiality. He is profoundly sincere himself, and he demands it of his children.

At the same time one feels, after seeing such a lesson, that there is no reason why there shouldn't be groups of happy children all over the world revealing the treasures of their hearts and minds with the aid of a little charcoal and paint. There is only one Cizek in the world, but there are a number of art teachers who have both sincere artistic sensibility and an understanding of children, and to these the work of Professor Cizek and his class will be an encouragement and inspiration.

FRANCESCA M. WILSON.

Margarete Hanus. Aged 15 years.

"ALL THE MONTHS OF THE YEAR ON HER BACK."

(See p. 12 of Text.)